Memorandum

TO: Sue Sillick, Montana Department of Transportation

FROM: Cambridge Systematics

DATE: October 29, 2008

RE: Notes from Technical Panel Kickoff Meeting

Wednesday October 29, 2008
1:00 – 3:00 pm
MDTCNF Commission Room

Technical Panel Attendance

- Jim Skinner, MDT Planning

- Kris Christensen, MDT Engineering

- Hal Fossum, MDT Planning

- Sue Sillick, MDT Research

- Tim Davis, Montana Smart Growth Coalition

- Harold Stepper, Jefferson County Planning

- Stephanie Millar and Steve Earle, Missoula (via videoconference)

- Chris Saunders, City of Bozeman (via videoconference)

- Bob Burkhardt, FHWA

Consultant Team Attendance

- George Mazur & Christopher Wornum, Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

- Dan Norderud, Robert Peccia & Associates

- Dave Aushermann, Renaissance Planning Group (via teleconference)

Sue Sillick opened the meeting and described the general contract provisions and procedures for communicating between the Technical Panel (TP) and the consultants. She stated the TP's responsibility is to provide guidance and ensure that the end result reflects what they want to see from the project; the TP is the key to success for this project. Sue also encouraged TP members to engage themselves and the consultants in relevant technical discussions. However, anything affecting time, scope and budget must be coordinated through her office.   Sue

stressed that communication is vital to ensure there are no surprises. In addition, progress reports should be detailed enough to allow the TP to determine whether the project is on scope, budget, and time.

George provided presentation slides covering the consultant team structure and research plan. George emphasized the team's ability to bring both national and Montana experience to the research project.   The following comments were offered on the work steps, deliverables, schedule and TP role:

- Jim Skinner asked if the research plan included any legal research because local government may have different requirements than state government. George answered it's in Task 1. Jim noted that he wanted the toolkit to be useful to local governments since not all projects will have (or be intended) for federal and state funding assistance.

- Tim Davis asked Jim to clarify his comments. Tim felt it was important to look at how federal and state policies and funding can address identified gaps. Tim encouraged the team to take a look at the model subdivision regulations being developed by Jerry Grebenc (Department of Commerce, Community Technical Assistance Program) since the regulations address street standards.

- Hal Fossum noted that the schedule adheres to original proposal but since started late (one month) we are accelerating first three tasks near parallel.   Hal noted that smart transportation and land use tools are often underdeveloped for small (unincorporated) growth areas. He noted there should be feedback between Tasks 1 and 3 to make sure the gaps identified are really research gaps. Hal observed that the product of the gap analysis should be the basis for further work efforts.

- Sue Sillick asked how the peer network will work after the project is completed. Sue noted that there are costs associated with operating and maintaining such a network and that MDT's IT standards must be followed. George responded that the project should have some enthusiasm towards the end where groups will maintain the tools. Dave Aushermann suggested 3rd party services could be used to support the peer network and tools, and one option could be to facilitate at a national level (FHWA, AASHTO, EPA, University, etc.)

- Chris Wornum suggested making the tools useful for other reasons such as local land use growth, project specs and funding, etc.

- Bob Burkhardt commented that there may be problems with a self guiding peer network and suggested it may be appropriate to ask for volunteer(s) to step forward and maintain the network. Sue expressed skepticism that having the network maintained by volunteers would be reliable.

- Hal offered that each member is here to represent their own viewpoints and special interests. He felt TP members need to recognize that they may be the ones leading the development of the Peer Network.

CAMBRIDGE
SYSTEMATICS

George Mazur stepped through several slides and handouts related to the Task 1 document review and survey. These items were described as needing immediate attention by the TP since they affected the ability to meet the scheduled delivery date for Tech Memo #1. Specific focus was paid to the Task 1.2 survey of Montana transportation professionals, with a question posed as to whether the consultant team should encourage (or even allow) survey participants to forward the survey to other individuals.

- Jim will provide updated list of contacts to Dan Norderud. This was followed up on after the meeting in a discussion with Hal Fossum, with Dan Norderud agreeing to contact Lynn Zanto and request a current list of Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee and Technical Advisory Committee members. An email request for this information was submitted to Lynn Zanto on 10/29/08.

- Hal indicated a preference to survey in a representative sample. He noted that the research team should keep in mind who the toolkit is intended to benefit.

- Tim Davis noted that in his opinion, it did not really matter if the initial online survey had broad distribution as long as the information is used as a means of seeking useful information. He noted that perhaps the survey should sample respondents like the Montana Association of Counties and Montana League of Cities and Towns (which have Land Use and Transportation Committees), and members of the Montana Association of Planners (MAP). Tim noted that the Montana Smart Growth Coalition has 40 member groups.

- Harold Stepper suggested that the volume of surveys received by target respondents is typically large, so maybe should go out under MDT auspices. It may also be beneficial to contact some stakeholder groups and have them send out follow-up reminder to fill out survey.

- Stephanie Millar and Steve Earle felt it was necessary to look over the distribution list for the initial survey. As a follow-up comment, George Mazur outlined a tentative timeline allowing for the review of the survey instrument between November 5 to the 12th and the deployment of the survey by November 17th.

- Sue offered that most surveys drag out and getting results could cause a delay in the provision of the first technical memo. She indicated a preference for good survey results rather than strict adherence to schedule.

- George reviewed examples of questions and noted these were illustrative examples, but not necessarily the draft questions from the survey. He noted the intent of the survey is to keep duration in the 5 to 10 minute range and ask respondents if we can follow-up.

- Jim suggested that we leave space for respondent to elaborate or submit comments since a brief survey that presents choices that may not be appropriate in all cases can be frustrating. Give them choices to select: more specific needs, money, staff, and time.

- Tim Davis suggested that we consider seeking input about resources or tools that might be useful to local communities on the survey.

CAMBRIDGE
SYSTEMATICS

- The idea of using the survey to help gauge interest in a Peer Network or to find parties willing to maintain the Peer Network was suggested and generally discussed.

- Chris Saunders suggested that we include a "negative" question aimed at seeking information about the factors that are prohibiting individuals from planning in the manner they would like. It is important to focus our questions on why local communities are having planning problems. He noted we may just hear about common deficiencies or problems like lack of money and time, but it's important to find out about the level of community interest, political will, etc. The issues that concern individual/different communities will determine the needs: some communities have little engagement from citizens

- The TP expressed a preference for an online survey, with the link e-mailed to the distribution list. General concurrence was reached that the survey invitation should be sent out from MDT (actual person to be determined), the survey will be sent directly to a list of specific recipients, and the survey will also be sent to MAP and League of Cities/Counties for further distribution to their members. The list of specific recipients will be developed by the consultant team from TPCC and TAC membership lists, and sent to the TP for review and concurrence.

George Mazur reviewed several slides showing the references that have been assembled to date on national practices. Hal Fossum indicated that, on first glance, the list seemed complete. No other comments were offered.

George Mazur briefly described five toolkit and outreach examples that were provided to the TP. He stressed that the intent was to illustrate different ways in which a toolkit could be organized, but that the consultant team was making no recommendation at the current. George also reviewed the teams proposed toolkit implementation steps. The following comments were offered:

- Chris Saunders noted that 9 times out of 10, major infrastructure improvements happen within road rights-of-way and there is a need for coordinating corridor development. He noted a great lack of understanding about how to get a road in place, and good concise guidance on what do easements do, roads established by use or petitions may be useful, how who to get easements, and rights-of-way.

- Dan Norderud indicated that there is a lot of information available on the web from local communities. He asked for TP members to suggest sources of information for our literature review if members knew of good example planning documents.

- Tim Davis suggested the planning documents for urban growth cities and urban fringe areas should be the focus. Could expand beyond transportation. Tim pointed out that SB 201 from the last legislature created and incentivized a smart growth planning process that cities and counties can use together to plan for efficient growth inside and adjacent to cities and towns. He noted Gallatin County and the Cities of Bozeman and Belgrade have implemented planning with this cooperative approach.

CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS

- Chris Saunders requested connectivity between roads and other infrastructure (e.g., utilities) be shown so local jurisdictions can see their effects on planning for growth across different infrastructure needs. Chris liked the example tool #4 because it allowed for quick conceptualization of ideas. However, he cautioned that people often select to implement something they like, even though it may work best in combination with other tools or measures.

- Hal Fossum asked how do we grab from the best of these and integrate them. He noted it is important to recognize that speaking to policy makers may require different approaches than if we're conveying information only to staffers and technicians. He felt it was essential to present a resources included in a toolkit in a manner that conveys the following: "Here's a tool—it's useful in this situation—it will address these things— here are examples where the tool worked effectively—this is what it might cost."

- Dave Aushermann recognized there is difficulty in serving different audiences and noted it may be beneficial to relate the pattern into a context. So different tool boxes for different groups. Look at book Pattern Language (Christopher Alexander)

- Dan Norderud commented it may be valuable to structure tools so user can drill down into an area that is relevant to their situation.

- Tim Davis suggested using web-based tools to allow users to self-select solutions that may be appropriate for their situation.

A short discussion was held regarding potential future TP meetings. George reviewed key milestone dates, and emphasized the need to meet only when sufficient new information is available. While the budget included four additional TP meetings, it was suggested that the next TP meeting occur in about five months and coincide with review of our more meetings. The TP expressed general concurrence with this plan. A preference was also expressed for conducting the Summit right after the tool kit mock-up instead of after completion of the final toolkit.

CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS